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Media release

Committees for Capital Cities coalition takes collective voice to Federal Parliament

25-27 June 2024

A coalition representing all Australian states' capital cities has taken its collective voice to Canberra to advocate for better policy and investment outcomes for the regions they represent.

The Committees for Cities are all independent, apolitical, member-based bodies.

'As representatives of all the states' capital cities, we provide a collective voice outside of political boundaries, which has not existed before,' Committee for Sydney CEO Eamon Waterford said.

'We are meeting with elected representatives who shape policies that affect our metropolitan city areas to ensure they understand who we are and the members we represent.'

With the six capital city areas being home to more than two-thirds of the country's population, Committee for Brisbane CEO Jen Williams said it was important that Federal elected representatives were aware of the Committees for Cities and their ability to affect change.

'Our independence from political boundaries and election cycles means we can act as facilitators, co-creators, collaborators – bringing together otherwise disparate groups to work for better outcomes for our cities and the people who live, work, learn and play in them,' Ms Williams said.

'We recognise that the Commonwealth has an important role in urban policy and development, but that there is a need for independent bodies like ours to help make things happen.'

Committee for Adelaide CEO Sam Dighton said it was important to come together to share learnings and discuss how the Committees for Cities can capitalise on individual strengths and overcome shared challenges.

'We invite elected representatives to engage with us as a collective, as well as continuing to work directly with our individual organisations, to ensure our cities reach their full potential,' he said.

'Our trip to Canberra is to provide a collective voice for Australia's capital cities and surrounding metropolitan areas and emphasise the role cities play in the Australian urban policy landscape.

'There is great power in working together to facilitate and advocate for outcomes to address shared challenges and shape the future of our respective cities.'

With the six largest cities in Australia accounting for nearly 70% of the country's economy, Committee for Perth CEO Paula Rogers said ensuring key industries were competitive and connected globally was important.

'In addition, addressing areas such as work force development, higher education and talent attraction and retention are vital to making sure our cities are able to take full advantage of global investment opportunities.'

Committee for Melbourne CEO Mark Melvin said rapid population growth was putting a strain on housing availability and affordability that needed to be addressed as a priority.

‘A lack of cohesive planning and historic underinvestment in public and active transport and social infrastructure is also putting pressure on our services, which is only increasing as our populations grow.’

Committee for Greater Hobart Policy Director Cam Crawford said while each of the Committees for Cities had its own challenges, and there were some differences in focus for regions like Greater Hobart compared to the larger cities, there was commonality across a lot of areas.

‘All of our cities are facing the challenges of increasing pressure across areas such as infrastructure, transport, housing, health, environment and economy,’ he said.

‘The challenges, especially in relation to the impacts on cost of living, are being talked about in our communities, board rooms and at all levels of government, and are reflected in policies and budget outcomes. That’s why it’s important we meet with decision-makers at all levels to ensure they have a full understanding of what we’re seeing in the areas we represent.’

Committees for Cities policy priorities:

- **The need for a strong national urban policy or cities policy**
 - The Commonwealth is currently developing a National Urban Policy – this cannot be a document that sits on a shelf. It should give direction to other government programs, including infrastructure prioritisation, migration policy, housing funding and climate change adaptation and net-zero policy.
 - It should focus on policy outcomes that require a nationally consistent approach and that cannot be delivered by state or local government.
- **Ensuring cities are affordable, comfortable and secure places to live**
 - Just as we have a target for Net Zero, we also need a national target for housing. Agreeing a nationally consistent definition for social and affordable housing and setting of clear targets for the percentage of all homes to be social and affordable by 2050 (potentially between 10-20%).
 - Double HAF and NHAF funding to secure long-term supply of housing for those that need it most and frontload current round of HAF investment to enable more housing projects to get off the ground quicker.
 - Taking leadership on tax reform to address demand-side drivers of housing unaffordability.
 - Simplify National Build-to-Rent legislation and Incentives.
 - Invest in metropolitan greening city initiatives.
- **Investing in infrastructure to support growth**
 - Aligning infrastructure investment with the National Urban Policy – ensuring that Commonwealth funding delivers on the government’s decarbonisation, housing affordability and urban objectives.
- **Supporting cities to Australia’s net zero aspirations**
 - Setting sustainable transport mode share targets and aligning commonwealth transport funding to achieve this through how funding is prioritised.
 - Providing nationally consistent sectoral decarbonisation targets and aligning grant and programs (for example, continuing the Small Renewable Energy scheme and expanding to include home batteries).
- **Enabling national economic and industry policy**
 - Aligning national economic development priorities with state-level strategies to support the development and diversification of metropolitan economies.



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- Coordinate investment attraction programs that enhance national competitive advantages in transparently identified key sectors and as part of an industry strategy.
- Supporting universities to continue to attract and educate global talent by not introducing the cap on international student numbers.
- Ensuring migration policy aligns with skill needs in sectors where skills and workforce gaps exist.

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